

Johnston to retreat from Bowling Green and abandon Nashville. McClellan was greatly attracted by a scheme of this character; it appealed strongly to his imagination; it seemed to promise startling and speedy and decisive results. He got wholly out of conceit with the advance on Manassas, to which he had, during the autumn, encouraged the Government to look forward as probable before the roads should become impassable.¹ He changed his tone, and temporized with the President and Secretary of War. He thought that he saw in this scheme of transporting the army by water much more brilliant results, but until he had thought it out and made up his own mind, he would not speak plainly as to his plans. It is also quite certain that he thought that two or three more months of drill and discipline would improve the condition of the army. The older regiments would be none the worse for this further time spent in learning their duties, while for the later-arrived troops such a season of preliminary work was well-nigh indispensable. While he was considering the matter, he fell ill. This was in December, 1861.

For at least six weeks before this happened, the inactivity of the army had been the cause of great dissatisfaction among public men in

Washington,
and, in fact, although to a less extent,
throughout
the North. It was not easy for men
wholly un-
familiar with war, who not only had
never done
military service themselves, but who
possessed to
the full the characteristic Anglo-Saxon
indifference

† McClellan to Cameron ; 5 W. R., n.